

DESCRIPTION OF THE EGGS OF THE KAGU, *RHINOCHETUS*
JUBATUS, VERREAUX ET DES MURS.

By ALFRED J. NORTH, C.M.Z.S., Ornithologist.

(Plate I.)

RECENTLY Mr. H. E. Finckh presented to the Trustees two eggs of the Kagu that were laid in confinement at Mosman, Sydney. Two of these birds, which he received from New Caledonia over three years ago, started at the beginning of April, 1902, to form a nest of dried twigs and leaves at the bottom of a box in their aviary, and on the 6th April an egg was laid. This was sat on for three weeks, one bird occasionally relieving the other, from which Mr. Finckh concluded they were a pair, but as there was no sign of a chick in the egg it was removed. Another egg was deposited in a small wooden shelter-house in their aviary on the 1st of May, twigs and leaves afterwards being collected and placed around it; the birds sat closer on this egg, but without any success. A third egg was laid on the 25th May, and sat upon for three weeks, but with a similar result. One egg, presented, unblown, showed no trace of fertilisation; neither has Mr. Finckh noticed any actions of the birds, which are alike in plumage, that would furnish undoubted proof that they were male and female.

Of their habits, Mr. Finckh writes:—"From personal observations of the two birds I have had in confinement for over three years, the Kagu is fond of seclusion, but withal the one I regard as the male shows fight at the slightest provocation. Holding itself quite erect, with spread wings, pouting breast, raised crest, and tail brought almost between its legs, the aspect of the bird appears very stately when prepared to give battle. A peculiarity shewn when fighting is that it only attacks its opponent low down, so that when one holds a hand to the height of its body, it misses aim, but if held near the ground it administers a severe nip. When quarreling over a delicacy, the two birds peck at each other's legs."

One egg is oval, the other a blunt ended ellipse in form, the shell being close-grained, smooth, and slightly lustrous. Before they were emptied of their contents, their ground colour was of a warm buffy-brown, but now the shells are dry they are of a uniform pale brown, over which is distributed small dots, blotches, and broad, irregular-shaped longitudinal, and oblique streaks of

reddish-umber and umber-brown, intermingled with similar but larger underlying markings of a paler tint, and of different shades of inky-grey which predominate, especially on one specimen, at the thicker end. Many of the markings overlie one another, some very distinct, others having a blurred look as if the colour had been laid on with a brush, and had run or been smeared. On one specimen the surface markings are more numerous, on the other the underlying streaks and blotches; in both, the latter in some places form large confluent patches. Length:—(A) 2.45×1.84 inches; (B) 2.35×1.86 inches.

So much do these eggs resemble in colour and character of markings those of a Gull or Tern, that had I not known otherwise, I should have unhesitatingly pronounced them to be one or the other. An accurate idea, however, of the markings on the eggs of the Kagu will be gained on reference to the accompanying Plate I., where they are figured of the natural size.
